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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

High Lights of the Dietetics Convention

A radio talk by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Wednesday, October 24, 1934.

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MR. SALISBURY: Miss Van Deman, we missed you on the Farm and Home Hour last week. I suppose you were all tied up with the meetings of the American Dietetics Association.

MISS VAN DEMAN: I certainly was. And by the way, did you hear the joke on the dietitians?

MR. SALISBURY: No, what was it?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Well you know these dietitians came to Washington many hundred strong. To be exact, 735 registered at the association headquarters. And naturally that hotel was a mighty lively place. There were dietitians everywhere you looked. One day as one group after another of these smart, fine-looking women hurried through the lobby, a business man on the side lines turned to another and said, "Say, what are these dietitians anyway - kind of assistants to morticians?"

MR. SALISBURY: Anybody try to set him straight and tell him dietitians are all for keeping people on top of the sod?

MISS VAN DEMAN: No, they just decided maybe he was one of those old-fashioned chaps who go on the theory that "you dig your grave with your teeth."

MR. SALISBURY: Well, isn't there a grain or two of truth in that old adage?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Oh, yes, in a way. Just as there is in that one, "If you tell me what you eat, I'll tell you what you are." I wish everybody could have heard the fine common-sense talks about food fads and fallacies on this program of the dietetics association.

Mrs. Mary Swartz Rose of Columbia University kept us laughing an hour one morning while she read some of the fantastic statements about diet that get into print.

All this talk about acidosis, for instance, and alkalosis. As for real acidosis, she pointed out that Dr. Van Slyke, an eminent specialist in this subject, finds it very hard indeed to diagnose an acid condition even in his own clinic with every scientific facility at hand. Then when

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he does find it, it's no simple matter to treat. His advice is for any one, unless he's under the care of a physician, to go ahead and eat plenty of fruits and vegetables and milk that we know have an alkaline reaction in the body, and not to bother about acidosis. Certainly not to go on some kind of freak diet prescribed by mail or in an expensive book or a course of lessons that costs a lot of money.

Also Mrs. Rose and other speakers at the convention had a lot to say about foods that are supposed to do special things for you, like fish as brain food. I wonder whether you ever happened to hear what Mark Twain replied to a young author who sent him a sample of his work and asked him whether it was a good thing for authors to eat fish. This young chap had heard that the phosphorus in fish makes brains. Here's what Mark Twain wrote back:

"If the composition you send is about your average, I should judge that perhaps a couple of whales would be all you want for the present. Not the largest kind, but simply good middling sized whales."

MR. SALISBURY: Well, I guess Mark Twain settled fish as brain food for us.

MISS VAN DEMAN: But to go back to the dietetics meetings. If you've been puzzled by all this talk about not eating carbohydrates (that is, starches), and protein foods at the same meal, I wish you might have listened to the fine scholarly talk Dr. Martin Rehfuess of Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia, gave here in Washington last week. He and his colleagues have conducted over a thousand experiments on hundreds of men and women to find the scientific facts about the digestion of different foods in the human stomach. To some of these people who cooperated with them they gave meat alone, and found just how long it took to digest. Later they gave these same people meat plus mashed potato. As for the results, Doctor Rehfuess found that all the people in the group digested the meat and potato just as easily and comfortably and almost as quickly as the meat alone. On the average, the meat and potato took only 4 minutes longer. In other words Doctor Rehfuess and his associates couldn't find any scientific reason to support the idea that any normal person shouldn't eat protein and starchy foods together.

And as a matter of fact, we do eat protein and carbohydrates together all the time. When we eat beans, for instance, or peas, or peanuts, or wheat bread or rye bread. In the wheat grain, nature combined starch and gluten (that is protein), and it's not easy to separate them. As for the hundreds and thousands of made dishes we've grown up on, well, here's a verse that Dr. Graham Lusk tossed off one time. These eminent scientists do have their lighter moments, it seems.

"There was a man in our town
And he was wondrous wise
But even he could never
Unscram scrambled eggs or uncuss custard pies."

Another speech of particular interest to us Farm and Home Hour people was the report on home canning by Professor Tanner of the University of Illinois. My, oh my, doesn't he come out flat-footed against the unsafe water-bath and oven methods of processing string beans and corn and peas and meats. He says these are dangerous and wasteful methods of canning all foods of this type. The steam pressure method is the only method to use on non-acid foods. Professor Tanner doesn't mince words, and he backs everything he says with figures from the studies he's made in the bacteriology department there at the University of Illinois.

Of course Dr. Louise Stanley has been saying exactly the same thing for years in our bulletin on home canning. We feel very strongly that if you're going to can foods in your own home kitchen, you need the safest advice that science can give you.

MR. SALISBURY: Does this include community canning too?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, indeed. The right methods are even more important there.

MR. SALISBURY: By the way, does your bureau have directions for canning meats, vegetables, and fruits in these community canneries?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes. And we're glad to send them to anybody who's working in such a community enterprise.

Time's up for today, but I'll be with you next week.

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